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Southeast Portland

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PORTLAND SUPERFUND SITE

Harbor cleanup must extend to the Columbia

4/16/12

I am a fisherman on the Columbia River, as were members of every generation before me, both before and since the Yakama Nation's 1855 treaty that affirmed the Yakama's right to a salmon harvest.

Now as a Yakama Nation Tribal Council member and chairman of Yakama's Fish and Wildlife Committee, I call for the restoration of the Willamette and Columbia rivers, not only because failure to do so violates the Yakama Nation's treaty, but also because failure violates the civil rights of all people who rely upon these rivers for subsistence fishing and other uses.

The Portland harbor Superfund site must be cleaned up for any plan to restore the Columbia and its salmon runs to have a chance of success. Toxics from Portland harbor

are evident in Columbia River water west of its confluence with the Willamette. The toxics in the water are lethal to juvenile salmon, which are protected under the Yakama Nation Treaty and also under the Endangered Species Act.



VIRGIL LEWIS

IN MY
OPINION

Juvenile salmon from all of the Columbia River's tributaries must make their way through the outflow from Portland harbor in the Columbia and can't avoid the toxics from Oregon's largest Superfund site.

Today some of the largest polluters are arguing for cost savings instead of protecting and restoring the natural environment for the people who call our great region home. The Lower Willamette

Group has recently released a draft feasibility study that lists almost a dozen approaches for cleaning up Portland harbor. Over the next

several months the Yakama Nation will be reviewing that study and will look critically at the assumptions used to predict how well each approach would work to protect the environment. We should not be looking to cut corners. This is the time to do the right thing and clean up the harbor so that it is safe forever.

The Yakama Nation's approach is to combine cutting-edge science with our traditional knowledge to restore nearly extinct fish to the Columbia River. Fifteen years ago, the Yakama Nation Tribal Council traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for listing Portland harbor as a Superfund site. Yakama served for many years on the Portland Harbor Natural Resource Trustee Council.

In 2009, the Yakama Nation withdrew from the council over a disagreement with other trustees, who insisted upon limiting the damage assessment to the immediate area of Port-

land harbor and ignored the pollution that continues to flow from the site into the Columbia. The Yakama Nation sees no reason that the polluters should not be held accountable for all of the resources they injured, including those in the Columbia River.

The Yakama Nation cannot turn its back on the harm Portland harbor pollution has done — and continues to do — in the Willamette and Columbia rivers.

There is nothing more important than honoring our ancestors by protecting the spiritual and cultural resource that has sustained our people for thousands of years and restoring it for all people who will use this magnificent resource for generations to come.

Virgil Lewis is a member of the Yakama Nation Tribal Council, and he serves as chairman of Yakama's Fish and Wildlife Committee.

WHERE TO SUBMIT A COLUMN OR ESSAY Reach the editorial pages at **503-221-8150**. Guest columns, up to 500 words, may be sent by e-mail to **commentary@oregonian.com**, by fax to **503-294-4193**, or by mail to "In My Opinion," Op-Ed Page, The Oregonian, 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201. All submissions become the property of The Oregonian and will not be returned; they may be edited and may be published or otherwise used in any medium.

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